



TIP OF THE SPEAR

**Combat Controller
receives
Air Force Cross**



- ♠ **SOCKOR, ROK train together on the Korean peninsula**
- ♠ **Battle of Sper Kunday: U.S., French, Afghans fight as one team**
- ♠ **AFSOC welcomes first female flying squadron commander**



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Tip of the Spear

Adm. Eric T. Olson
Commander, USSOCOM

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Command Sergeant Major

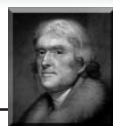
Col. Hans Bush
Public Affairs Director

Mike Bottoms
Managing Editor

Tech. Sgt. Victoria Meyer
NCOIC, Command Information

Master Sgt. Laura LeBeau
Staff Writer

Sgt. 1st Class Timothy Lawn
Staff Photographer



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Best magazine format in DoD 2007 and 2008

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Front Cover: Staff Sgt. Zachary Rhyner deployed to Afghanistan in 2008. Rhyner, a combat controller with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Air Force Base, N.C., was awarded the Air Force Cross and Purple Heart for his actions in Shok Valley, Afghanistan, April 6, 2008. The Air Force Cross is second only to the Medal of Honor. U.S. Air Force photo.

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SOCKOR, ROK force

By Maj. Chris LeCron
SOCKOR Public Affairs

Editor's note: Due to security requirements and for the safety and security of sources, specific names and ranks are not used in portions of this article.

Special Operations Command Korea continued to provide essential special operations support to the Combined Forces Command during Exercise Key Resolve/Foal Eagle March 09. These annual joint combined exercises focus on refining the strategic, operational and tactical execution of military operations in defense of the Republic of Korea.



“Although the U.S. military is rightly focused on Iraq and Afghanistan, we are constantly training and working with our ROK partners in a Korean region that could ignite in conflict at a moment's notice,” said Army Command Sgt. Maj. Michael

Sherlock, the senior enlisted advisor to SOCKOR.

Real-world tensions between North Korea and the U.S./ROK alliance occurred just before the start of the Key Resolve exercises in March. North Korea claimed to be preparing to test-fire a long-range ballistic missile and threatened ROK civilian passenger planes flying near its

airspace March 5.

“Key Resolve gives us a chance to combine with the ROK Special Warfare Command to train in our essential special operations missions and simulate command operations in a contingency scenario,” said an Air Force lieutenant colonel assigned to SOCKOR.

“The United Nations Command notified the North Korean Armed Forces that this exercise (Key Resolve) is defense-oriented, focusing on a military readiness posture,” the UNC said in a news release.

Exercises Key Resolve and Foal Eagle are designed to provide training for U.S. and ROK forces

in the various aspects of reception, staging, onward movement and integration in support of the defense of the ROK against external aggression.

U.S. Special Forces Soldiers assigned to 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) conduct fast-rope training at Damyang, Republic of Korea, with members of the ROK Army's 11th Special Forces Brigade. Fast-rope training requires Soldiers to descend from a helicopter as it hovers. The Okinawa, Japan-based Green Berets are providing a small element to train with their ROK counterparts for annual exercises called Key Resolve and Foal Eagle. The goal of the exercises is to test and maintain military capabilities of both nations in a combined effort to defend the Republic of Korea. Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Kosterman.



es train together

on

KOREAN

Peninsula

Tip of the Spear

“Key Resolve gives us a chance to combine with the ROK Special Warfare Command to train in our essential special operations missions and simulate command operations in a contingency scenario,” said an Air Force lieutenant colonel assigned to SOCKOR.

“In addition to our permanent party SOCKOR personnel, Key Resolve and Foal Eagle allow us to integrate our assigned reserve element forces and multiple special operations units from outside of Korea,” said the SOCKOR lieutenant colonel.

Although the U.S. military plans to maintain forces in Korea for the foreseeable future, wartime operational control of ROK forces are scheduled to shift from U.S. to ROK control in 2012. This transformation makes the SOCKOR mission of advising, training and supporting a strong ROK Special Warfare Command all the more important.

“Our close association with the ROK Special Warfare Command over the past twenty years has significantly enhanced the special operations capabilities of South Korea from any threat or aggression,” said Army Col. Larry Greene, SOCKOR deputy commander – Transformation.

During Key Resolve and Foal Eagle, a number of special operations units converged on the Korean peninsula. As the only theater special operations command where U.S. and allied forces are institutionally organized for combined special operations, SOCKOR also maintains operational control over all assigned, attached, or deployed Special Operations Forces assigned in the Korean theater of operations.

During annual exercises such as Key Resolve and Foal Eagle, the ROK Special Warfare Command combines with SOCKOR to create the Combined Unconventional Warfare Task Force, commanded by ROK Lt. Gen. Kim Sang Ki. When fully assembled in response to crisis or war, CUWTF becomes one of the world’s most powerful special operations force.

A hub of activity during Key Resolve occurs at the Combined Joint Special Operations Liaison Element or CJSOLE. The CJSOLE is SOCKOR’s liaison element embedded within the Korean Air Operations Center to de-conflict, integrate and coordinate special operations in the

deep battle space. The KAOC consists of all components from all services and operates within the Hardened Theater Air Control Center or HTACC. The CJSOLE also provides direct input to the joint targeting process.

“Think of it like a sausage factory,” said a SOCKOR Air Force lieutenant colonel, in a description of the CJSOLE. “Some of us are writing the recipe, some are making the sausage, and some are cooking it. We have our people involved at every stage of the process, every moment, continuously.”

One of the U.S. SOF teams that deployed to Korea for Key Resolve is the 6th Special Operations Squadron, an Air Force Special Operations Command unit from Hurlburt Field, Fla. They conducted advisor operations with the ROK’s 255th Special Operations Squadron, an Air Force unit assigned to CUWTF.

“We have learned many things from



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Kosterman

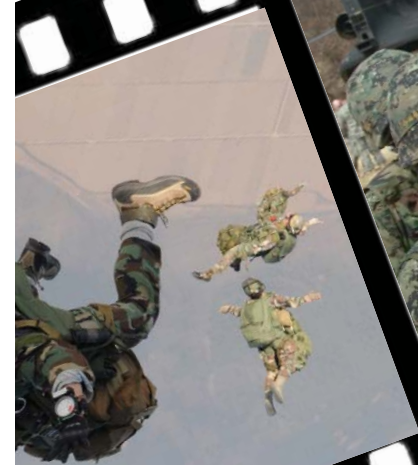
(From left to right)
A U.S. Special Forces Soldier assigned to 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) jumps from the back of a 1st Special Operations Squadron MC-130H Combat Talon II. A U.S. Special Forces Soldier assigned to 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) conducts marksmanship training at Damyang, Republic of Korea, with members of the ROK Army’s 11th Special Forces Brigade. Special Operations Command Korea troops prepare for airborne jumps with a helium blimp and gondola at the ROK Drop Zone.

this joint training with the American Air Force and Army,” stated Lt. Col. Lee, commander of the 255th SOS.

The culmination of the training between the 6th SOS and 255th SOS was a nighttime air mission that included ROK HALO (high altitude low opening) airborne operations. The aircraft used was a host nation C-130E Hercules, and the mission was executed by the ROK/U.S. special operations teams.

Airmen of the 353rd Special Operations Group, based out of Kadena Air Force Base, Japan, also conducted HALO jumps from the back of an MC-130H

Warfare Task Force, composed of ROK and U.S. Naval Special Warfare units, maintained continuous communications with deployed NSW forces and CUWTF during



Tech. Sgt. Aaron Cram



Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Andrew Kosterman



Photo by Maj. Chris LeCron

Combat Talon II near Daegu Air Base, Korea, March 19.

“We perform special operations activities throughout the Pacific area and are currently participating in the Key Resolve and Foal Eagle exercises in the Republic of Korea,” said an Air Force sergeant assigned to the 353rd SOG.

Members of the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) based from Fort Lewis, Wash., and Okinawa, Japan, trained on skill sets specific to their mission with their ROK counterparts. Along with their normal unconventional warfare mission on land, 1st SFG(A) and ROK 11th Special Forces Brigade Soldiers conducted airborne and fast-roping missions to assault their exercise objectives from the air. They also conducted helocast missions with ROK Navy SEALs to infiltrate their training targets from the sea.

“I have been an LNO in all of the ROK Special Forces Brigades,” stated an American Army sergeant first class currently deployed to ROK’s 11th Brigade. “These exercises like Key Resolve get better and better each year.”

At Chinhae Naval Base, the Combined Naval Special

Warfare Task Force, composed of ROK and U.S. Naval Special Warfare units, maintained continuous communications with deployed NSW forces and CUWTF during the exercises. In addition to command and control tactical operations center duties, the task force executed multiple combined maritime special operations missions along the southern ROK coast.

The combined NSW forces at Chinhae used SEAL Delivery Vehicles to execute maritime special operations against critical maritime targets. Operational scenarios for SDVs included clandestine insertion of SEALs, direct action against defended maritime targets, maritime recovery operations, and special reconnaissance. The SEALs demonstrated their trademark precision, stealth and skill in maritime special operations.

In addition to command post exercises, SOCKOR conducted routine airborne training with ROK SWC at a ROK drop zone. U.S. augmentees, as well as ROK and U.S. SOF personnel assigned to Korea, maintained their airborne infiltration proficiency, reinforcing the SOF capability to go “anytime, anywhere.” It was also a great team building event for ROK and U.S. forces, and a motivational kickoff for Key Resolve.

With exercises such as Key Resolve and Foal Eagle, U.S. and ROK Special Operations Forces continue to maintain a strong alliance with their ROK counterparts in order to maintain peace on the Korean peninsula and the region. The ROK-U.S. alliance is built on the motto, “Katchi Kapshida” – “We Go Together.” SOCKOR exemplifies this motto with its combined organization and training with the ROK Special Warfare units.



The Battle of Sper Kunday

U.S., French, Afghans fight as one

*By Maj. Jim Gregory
SOCEUR Public Affairs*

Combat never goes exactly as expected, and it is not so much about what the plan says, but more about how Soldiers in tough situations bond with and support their brothers around them when the shooting starts. Such was the case on a scorching August day that led to the most significant loss of life for the French army since the 1983 Beirut barracks bombing that killed 58 soldiers. This day, 10 French paratroopers were killed and another 21 wounded. After the battle, President Nicholas Sarkozy immediately flew to Kabul to be with the men who fought and died alongside each other and to reassure them that France would stand by their side. A ceremony January 23 at Panzer Kaserne gymnasium revealed the heroic efforts of all Coalition forces involved in the fight, known as the Battle of Sper Kunday, as two Green Berets from 1st Battalion, 10th Special Forces Group, Company A, were honored with Bronze Star Medals for Valor and six others with Army Commendation Medals for Valor.

On the morning of Aug. 18, 2008, members of Operational Detachment Alpha 0114 and an International Security Assistance Force contingent began movement toward the village of Sper Kunday, located in the mountainous region northeast of Kabul. The ISAF was composed of 60 French troops from the 8th Infantry Parachute Regiment soldiers, 30 French marines from the Regiment de Marche du Tchad serving as the Embedded Training Team, or mentor element, for the Afghan Forces, and a platoon from the 2nd Company C Kandak of the Afghanistan National Army. Their mission was to investigate a report of foreign fighters in the area.

As the 8th Para elements crested the saddle above the village, on foot, they found themselves caught in a coordinated enemy ambush cutting them off from friendly support. Immediately, the ETT commander, 1st Lt. Ronald Jean of the French marines, working in coordination with the U.S.

Special Forces commander, Capt. Rich Nessel, and the ANA, set up a hasty perimeter to support the element in contact on the mountainside.

Complications stemming from an inability to contact higher headquarters as well as the element in contact contributed to the “fog of war.” Jean attempted to contact the Para platoon leader and the supporting elements at the patrol base five kilometers behind him, but to no avail. Nessel’s team was trying to call their own Task Force, but also initially had communication problems.

With fire coming from several directions, Jean switched focus to his men and placed his vehicle in an

continued on page 10





(Top) Patrol base: French and U.S. special forces set up their patrol base overlooking the valley where the 8th Para recce patrol was ambushed. The area is five kilometers west of the ambush site. **(Right) Nessel, Jean, Sarkozy:** 1st Lt. Ronald Jean introduces Capt. Rich Nessel to French President Sarkozy following the memorial service for the fallen soldiers in Kabul. Courtesy photos.



First fighting position: As enemy contact ensued, French, U.S. and ANA personnel set up a security perimeter. The French officer, 1st Lt. Jean, was struck in the leg by an enemy sniper just moments after the photo was taken. Courtesy photo.

exposed position to shield his dismounted forces nearby. As he directed fire and attempted to gain situational awareness of the elements in contact, he still could not make constant radio contact with the Para elements on the hill. (He later learned this was because the Para platoon leader had been severely wounded and the platoon second-in-command had been killed. In addition, the platoon radio was destroyed when the radio operator was killed.)

Meanwhile, Nessel and his team became targets of effective enemy small-arms fire. As they returned fire and began calling for air support, it became evident they were facing a determined enemy who was not planning to shoot and run like so many other insurgents they had faced.

The fire was incredibly intense around both the Special Forces team and Jean, who was leading the ETT. Eventually, an enemy sniper round found its mark, embedding deep in Jean's leg. He calmly continued to issue orders on his radio even as U.S. Special Forces medics rushed to his aid.

"It was a heart-stopping moment, not because of fear or anything, but of concern and the sudden rush to take action and to render aid," said Nessel. "Lieutenant Jean just drove on; the injury definitely affected him, but he was in charge of his men, and he was not going anywhere. We just followed that cue and kept up the fight."

As the day wore on, the coalition forces maneuvered toward the enemy positions, resisting steady rocket-propelled grenade, machine-gun and small-arms fire. Lt. Jean tried to evacuate the pinned-down platoon that was still under heavy enemy fire, but he was ordered to wait until reinforcements arrived to attempt a new action.

Teamwork amongst the U.S. and French forces was critical. "The French up in the saddle were surrounded on three sides," said Nessel. "If First Lieutenant Jean's men and our men did not fight as hard as they did, the rest of the Paras would have been completely surrounded and annihilated. There would have been 60 French KIA. The enemy tried to accomplish this and failed. Our direct fire repulsed the enemy's attempts to encircle the Para elements and close. Effective close-air support held back the enemy's direct assault."

The wounded Jean became the sole link between the French forces, the U.S. Special Forces and the close air support aircraft above. He translated commands flawlessly from Nessel to the French forces on the ground and back through to the U.S. Air Force Tactical Air Controller attached to the Special Forces Team, who was able to direct air support onto hostile enemy targets. Coordination of the fight was being conducted in two languages and through two U.S. services. It was the professionalism of both the French and the U.S. forces on the ground that enabled effective command and control in an extremely chaotic situation.

For the next seven hours under direct fire, while suffering an excruciating leg wound, Jean never left the forefront of the battlefield. He allowed the medics to render aid only after the enemy forces were no longer an imminent danger to the Task Force. He did not leave the battlefield even as five separate medical evacuation helicopters, which he directed and controlled for his men, arrived and departed. Jean stayed on the battlefield until each of his soldiers and countrymen had left or been recovered.

During the 26 hours of the battle, U.S. Special Forces, French and Afghan soldiers fought together in the thickest of combat, and stood together as one team fighting and bleeding together as they supported the people of Afghanistan in their fight against the enemies of peace and stability.

The morning after: The zigzag path in the distance is the foot path where the 8th para was initially hit. When they crested the top, the enemy initiated the ambush from both sides of the saddle.



Special Operations Forces medical troops give home to sick Afghan baby

By CJSOTF-Afghanistan Public Affairs

An Afghan infant named Ramazan had an incredibly bleak future for most of his short life. Less than a year old, he was unable to eat normally due to a congenital defect that left an opening in the palate of his mouth. In late January, his father brought him to a Special Operations Forces clinic in the Shindand District, Herat province. Ramazan's family had new reason for hope as the Shindand troops took over care of six-month-old Ramazan.

The clinic staff in Shindand developed a special bottle to help feed Ramazan, but he was still not getting enough nourishment, so they decided to fly the baby and his father to Bagram Airfield for a more in-depth evaluation.

"We couldn't turn our back on Ramazan's condition, knowing he would die before the age of five without specialized medical attention. Our caring for this baby can also have a critical impact on the people of this area. Our true dedication and commitment to the people of Afghanistan is evident," said Army Maj. Mike Tarpey, Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan surgeon.

At the hospital, Coalition doctors discovered Ramazan had Pierre Robin Sequence, a congenital condition leaving him with an abnormally small jaw, an oversized tongue and a cleft palate, or incomplete closure in the roof of his mouth.

Tarpey worked in conjunction with Coalition doctors to arrange an operation for the baby.

"Ramazan had surgery to repair the cleft palate, but complications arose because he was already so fragile and malnourished," Tarpey said.

"The baby is still having difficulty breathing and feeding; essentially, he will need prolonged care as he grows into his tongue and jaw, which will need to happen before he can breathe and eat on his own," Tarpey added. Ramazan currently has a tracheotomy, as well as a feeding tube in his stomach, both of which require advanced levels of care.

After an extended stay at the hospital, Ramazan's care was turned over to CJSOTF-A medical troops, who welcomed him with open arms. Ramazan's father, who has five other children under the age of seven, had to return to his home in Shindand District to support the rest of his family.

CJSOTF-A has spearheaded Ramazan's treatment, but others have also stepped in on behalf of the baby.



Army Maj. Scott Townsend holds Afghan baby boy Ramazan as Air Force Capt. Wanda Hoggard looks on. Townsend's Civil Affairs troops were the baby's original caregivers at a Special Operations Forces clinic in Shindand District, Herat province. Photo by Army Spc. Anna Perry.

"We took Ramazan to the French Institute for Children, a modern state-of-the-art facility in Kabul. Their team, including local Afghan doctors, conducted an evaluation and shared their expertise and knowledge as we discussed different treatment options for the baby," Tarpey said.

In the meantime, Ramazan, now seventh months old, has found nothing but warmth and affection from the CJSOTF-A medical troops. Caregivers said the wide-eyed baby loves to be held and played with; thankfully, there are always troops on hand to shower him with hugs and kisses.

"Ramazan's presence here showcases the 'softer' side of Special Operations, the side that focuses not on kinetics, but on humanity," said a medic who helps provide extensive around-the-clock care for the baby.

Hopefully in the near future Ramazan will be healthy enough to be reunited with his family in Shindand.

For now, the medical staff and many other CJSOTF-A troops are more than happy to have Ramazan in their lives.

"I'd say we're all rather fond of the little guy ... he never goes without attention, that's for sure," the medic said.

SF Soldiers train, coach premiere police force in Iraq

*Story and photo by Staff Sgt. Bryan Franks
SOTF-North Public Affairs*

Preparing for a football season requires repetition and continuous training, but it's also important to have a good coaching staff. The same goes for maintaining a highly trained police force ready to respond at a moment's notice.

Two Operational Detachments Alpha from Special Operations Task Force — Central conduct foreign internal defense training and coaching with Iraq's Emergency Response Brigade. The ERB force consists of a select few who are trained, organized and equipped to complete what may be some of the most difficult, specialized and demanding security missions in the country.

Like offense and defense on a football team, the two ODAs focus their attention on different aspects of the ERB. One team works primarily with the ground-support side of the ERB, while the other team sets their priorities on working with brigade-level issues and higher in the ERB.

"It's been great working with another ODA ... it's almost like we are one team with different sides of the same mission," said one of the team commanders.



According to the ODA team captain responsible for the ground-support piece, the ERB can't be the best trained force in Iraq if they don't have the food, water, ammo, equipment and transportation to get the mission done.

"This is the best job I've ever had," said the ODA commander. "Very rarely does anything ever live up to your expectations. I can honestly say this has surpassed all of mine."

For most of the U.S. Special Forces Soldiers in the ODAs, this isn't their first deployment to Iraq. With each trip, they see improvements with the Iraqi Security Forces taking the lead role in securing their country.

"On my first deployment here, our team had around 150 Iraqis we were training ... most of whom came off the streets," said an Army sergeant first class who has been with the unit for seven years. "The ERB has a lot of good officers.

U.S. Special Forces Soldiers from Special Operations Task Force - Central advise Iraq's Emergency Response Brigade officers during an after action review of a house clearing exercise in Baghdad. The SF Soldiers use foreign internal defense training as a means to keep Iraqi Security Forces' skills sharp so they are better able to provide a secure Iraq.

They have their own selection process they go through ... they really are the 'tip of the spear' for the Iraqi Ministry of Interior."

The presence of SF advisors, according to the team captains, helps the ERB leaders as they work to refine training, mission planning logistics, and build partnerships with other branches in the ISF.

"Back in the rear, the unit spent most of the time training and planning how we were going to conduct FID training for this deployment," said an Army sergeant from California who has been with the ODA for three years. "We have the opportunity to take FID training to the next level with the ERB. The previous teams before us really set us up for success."

For the SF Soldiers experiencing their first deployment to Iraq, they too benefit from the ongoing advisory role and the experience level of the ERB.

"It's good to be here," said an Army sergeant on his first deployment to Iraq. "It's hard because you have to teach Iraqis what you already know. Your first instinct is to go ahead and do it instead of taking a step back to let them do it on their own."

According to these Soldiers, the training they provide gives them an opportunity to watch the ERB, as well as other ISF elements, grow into forces able to train, equip and conduct missions on their own.

"There's a lot more to running a force than just kicking down doors," said the sergeant.

"We have the FID training portion (down), but we also have to work with them in logistics and support," he continued. "The lasting effect we have is not whether we caught the next bad guy, but how well we've trained Iraqis to catch the next bad guy and manage their force."

Elite policing force beefs up selection course process

*Story and photos by Staff Sgt. Heidi Davis
SOTF – Central Public Affairs*

Iraqi National Emergency Response Brigade leaders and Coalition forces recently initiated the first two-week, pre-selection course to further narrow down candidates for the ERB's Operator Selection Course.

This new course was designed to help select candidates before they enter formal ERB training.

Candidates who have graduated from the police course or were members of nationalized Special Weapons and Tactics units were eligible to attend this course. Although the pre-selection course began with 30 candidates, ages 18 to 33, less than half will be recommended for ERB's selection process.

"We're looking for candidates who lead by example and can physically endure," said an advisor. "This way, only the best and (most) motivated are sent forward (to attend the ERB course)."

From day one, the course is designed to push candidates' physical and mental capabilities to full capacity. After a 21-mile course to test their endurance,

(1) Iraqi National Emergency Response Brigade hopefuls push a humvee down a road for two miles in Al Kut, Iraq, as part of the first, two-week ERB pre-selection course. Led by ERB graduates and Coalition forces advisors, the course is designed to ensure only physically and mentally fit applicants advance to the ERB Operator Selection Course. (2) One of 30 Iraqi National Emergency Response Brigade hopefuls threads a sling onto an issued AK-47 rifle. (3) Iraqi National Emergency Response Brigade hopefuls transport a sandbag over a two-mile stretch.



four men were eliminated from the course. The course included a two-mile litter carry; two-mile humvee push; two-mile sandbag carry; and a seven-mile ruck march.

The remainder of the course further tested candidates' mental and physical resolve to continue on their chosen path. Areas addressed

in the remainder of the course included basic rifle marksmanship, combat-lifesaver skills and close-quarter-battle techniques in urban environments.

"All here hope to be Iraqi ERB officers," said an

ERB graduate. "Completing this course will put them one step closer to that dream."





SOF AROUND THE WORLD - HAWAII
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – PACIFIC

Inaugural jump at Basilan Drop Zone

*Photos by Chief Petty Officer Keith Devinney
Special Operations Command - Pacific Public Affairs*



(Main photo) U.S. servicemembers assigned to Special Operations Command — Pacific make their way across Basilan Drop Zone for the inaugural jump at their newest training location in Oahu, Hawaii. SOCPAC sought out a new, safer, more convenient drop zone to conduct airborne operations training. The result is this long, wide field in central Oahu that SOCPAC has renamed Basilan Drop Zone. SOCPAC has shared a successful partnership with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Philippine National Police in the province of Basilan, Republic of the Philippines. The new training area was named Basilan to ensure that future SOCPAC generations remember and honor U.S. and RP security forces' efforts there. **(Inset photo)** A CH-47 Chinook helicopter takes off from Basilan Drop Zone in Oahu, Hawaii, with a full load of parachutists assigned to SOCPAC.

U.S. servicemembers assigned to Special Operations Command Pacific perform a High Altitude Low Opening jump from a CH-47 helicopter over their newest training location, Basilan Drop Zone, in Oahu, Hawaii.





SOF AROUND THE WORLD - CROATIA
SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND – EUROPE



SOCEUR holds park dedication ceremony for fallen SF Soldier

A newly renovated playground in Debeljak, Croatia, was dedicated recently in memory of Master Sgt. Ivica Jerak, who was killed in Iraq in 2005. Jerak was an assistant team sergeant assigned to U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C. Courtesy photo.

*By U.S. Army Corps of Engineers – Europe District
Public Affairs*

A new playground, two basketball courts, and four renovated classrooms were unveiled in the isolated Croatian village of Debeljak in a ceremony dedicated to the life of U.S. Army Master Sgt. Ivica Jerak.

Jerak, a native son of Debeljak who grew up playing basketball on the just-renovated outdoor court, was a highly decorated Special Forces Soldier who was killed by an IED while



Master Sgt. Ivica Jerak



serving in combat operations in Iraq in 2005.

His last assignment was as an assistant team sergeant assigned to the U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, N.C.

The renovations are dedicated to Jerak's memory "so that we can show that we're committed to our Soldiers ... and that we're dedicated to improving the lives of the community in which we work," said Maj. Jim Gregory, Special Operations Command Europe public affairs officer.

The \$130,000 refurbishment was funded by the U.S. European Command and managed by the U.S. Army Corps



Croatian and American dignitaries, including the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Robert Bradtke (second from the right) and Maj. Gen. Frank Kisner, commander of Special Operations Command - Europe, (second from the left) stand in front of a plaque with Mrs. Hye Jerak (third from the right) outside a newly renovated playground in Debeljak, Croatia, dedicated to the memory of Master Sgt. Ivica Jerak, who was killed in Iraq in 2005. Courtesy photo.

of Engineers Europe District.

"Hopefully this will somewhat lessen the pain for the community by providing a small reminder of the master sergeant for his service and dedication not only to America but also to Croatia," said John Thomas, the Corps of Engineers' construction representative for the project.

Jerak's wife, Hye, his mother, Milka, and several dignitaries, including the U.S. Ambassador to Croatia, Robert Bradtke, and the U.S. Special Operations Command Europe commander, Maj. Gen. Frank Kisner, attended the ceremony.

"These renovations will keep Master Sergeant Jerak's memory in our hearts and improve the lives of the children and the citizens of this great village," said Kisner in his speech at the event.

Jerak first entered the U.S. Army as a combat medic Jan. 19, 1988, and, after completion of initial entry training, was assigned to the 690th Medical Company, Fort Benning, Ga.

He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star with Valor, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and the Purple Heart.



U.S. ARMY SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Builders of a solid beginning take their first step

*By Sgt. 1st Class Eric Hendrix
USASOC Public Affairs*

The uncasing of a purple and white guidon marked the activation of the Army's newest civil affairs element during a ceremony at Fort Bragg, N.C., March 16. The 91st Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne) officially joined ranks alongside three other battalions of the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (Airborne).

Though the battalion just became officially active, it has been conducting the business of a civil affairs unit for some time in six countries in Africa and in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. "While most battalions do not deploy until their activation date, they've succeeded in standing-up and deploying their full capabilities simultaneously," said Col. Michael Warmack, 95th CAB (A) commander.

"Already the ninety-first has established a proud lineage. Already the ninety-first has suffered casualties."

Maj. Robert Lindenau of the 91st CAB was killed in action in October 2008 while serving in Afghanistan. Sgt. 1st Class Douglas Franklin was injured in an indirect attack in July 2008, resulting in a traumatic brain injury.

An Army civil affairs battalion is made up of individual teams of experts that work directly with the local population during and after the combat phase of any conflict. Civil affairs becomes a key combat multiplier during counterinsurgency efforts as the teams advise the commander about the attitudes of the local people.

The CA teams also act as liaisons between a particular region's people and nongovernment organizations who are there to assist with relief efforts. Civil affairs elements can provide training and mentorship that enable the citizens of a war-torn region to protect and support themselves.

The 91st CAB (A) Command Sgt. Major William Houston said, "The need for civil affairs is recognized at the commander in chief level and we've got our expansion plan cut out for us."

In President Barack Obama's agenda for defense he



The 91st Civil Affairs Battalion (Airborne) was officially activated with the unveiling of its guidon during a ceremony at Fort Bragg, N.C., March 16, 2009, by Col. Michael Warmack, commander of the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (A), and the new leadership of the battalion, Lt. Col. Daniel Barzyk and Command Sgt. Maj. William Houston. The battalion is now part of the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade (A) under the Army Special Operations Command located at Fort Bragg, N.C. Photo by Trish Harris.

states, "We must build up our Special Operations Forces, civil affairs, information operations, and other units and capabilities." Lt. Col. Daniel Barzyk, commander of the newly activated battalion said, "Since we started going to Afghanistan and Iraq, more and more of the conventional Army see civil affairs officers and NCOs in action and what they can do. I think there's an incredibly bright future for civil affairs."

Barzyk is excited about commanding the Army's newest civil affairs element. "It's an incredible feeling; it's a great job. I look forward to coming to work every day because I get a chance to lead Soldiers."

Retired 95th CAB (A) Command Sgt. Maj. Timothy Strong says, "Civil affairs creates the exit strategy for any conflict. Civil affairs creates stability."

"It is certainly an exciting time to be a civil affairs Soldier," Warmack said. For those Soldiers of the 91st CAB (A), it means *Auctores Solidi Principii*, or being the "builders of a solid beginning."

Medal of Honor recipients go overseas

Story by Dustin Senger

Area Support Group Qatar Public Affairs

Medal of Honor recipients, retired Army Col. Robert Howard and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Lee Littrell, recently met troops at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar. The holders of the highest military award were starting their sixth trip throughout Southwest Asia over the past five years to thank today's military men and women for their service.

"This is my first time meeting a Medal of Honor recipient," said Army Sgt. Edward Schaible, from Howell, N.J. "It's an honor to meet someone who put their life on the line to save others during a time of war."

Schaible met the recipients while enjoying a brief break from duty in Iraq, participating in the U.S. Central Command rest and recuperation pass program in Qatar.

"Their courage is inspirational for anyone placed in a situation where they must risk their life to save the lives of others," said Schaible.

"I enjoy seeing their smiling faces and the opportunity to thank them for the job their doing," said Littrell. "We do this every April; it's an important trip for us."

Littrell earned his Medal of Honor while serving within Vietnam's Kontum province, near Dak Seang, April 1970. Twenty-nine years have passed since the Army sergeant first class displayed indomitable courage in order to prevent excessive loss of life and injury after surviving an intense enemy mortar attack. Amidst seemingly superhuman endurance, he survived a four-day struggle to support a severely weakened battalion. Littrell continuously moved into areas under fire to distribute ammunition, strengthen defenses and care for the wounded.

While in Vietnam, Howard was recommended for the Medal of Honor on three separate occasions during a 13-month span of service. The first two were downgraded to the Distinguished Service Cross. He finally received the top military medal for selfless actions as a 5th Special Forces Group platoon sergeant in December 1968. Strong enemy engagement left the Army sergeant first class severely wounded and his weapon destroyed by a grenade explosion. Amid the chaos, Howard noticed his platoon leader had been seriously wounded and remained exposed to fire. Weaponless and unable to walk, he unhesitatingly crawled

through a hail of fire to retrieve his fallen leader at the risk of his own life. Howard continued to crawl in an effort to administer first aid to anyone injured, while encouraging and directing fire on an encircling enemy.

"Hearing about their experiences offers us a wealth of knowledge," said Army Staff Sgt. Samuel Slown, from Clarksville, Tenn.

He is a 5th Special Forces Group Soldier—the same unit Howard was assigned to when he earned his Medal of Honor in Vietnam.

"The things they survived paved the way for today's Special Forces community."

According to Slown, 5th Special Forces has awarded 14 Medals of Honor, half were presented posthumously.

"They've been through the fight and understand our sacrifices," said Air Force Lt. Col. Andrew Samerekovsky, from Bedford, Ohio, while finishing a four-day pass from duty in Iraq. "We appreciate all the celebrity support tours, but this visit has an entirely different level of meaning. This was a great surprise."



U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Samuel Slown is greeted by retired Col. Robert Howard, Medal of Honor recipient, at Camp As Sayliyah, Qatar. Slown is a 5th Special Forces Group Soldier—the same unit Howard was assigned to when he earned his Medal of Honor in Vietnam, December 1968. Howard and retired Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Lee Littrell, also a Medal of Honor recipient, were starting their sixth trip to U.S. military installations in Southwest Asia over the last five years to thank today's military men and women for their service. Courtesy photo.

160th begins training in new aquatics facility



The MH-6 configured modular egress training system™ at the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment Aquatics Training Facility. Courtesy photo



*By Kimberly Tiscione
160th Special Operations Aviation
Regiment Public Affairs*

The 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment's newest simulation training facility officially opened for business March 9.

"The one-sixtieth now has a state-of-the-art Aquatic Training Facility that provides realistic training for our flight battalions and initial qualifications for every newly assigned Night Stalker," said Lt. Col. Sal Herrera, commander of the Special Operations Aviation Training Company. "I am proud of everybody's efforts to make this facility a reality."

It took hours of hard work during an eight-year time period to design this one-of-a-kind facility.

A Soldier receives instruction in the Shallow Water Egress Trainer in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment Aquatics Training Facility. Courtesy photo.

Underwater egress simulators and a functioning hoist from an airframe-replicated platform above the water afford the regiment unlimited training opportunities in its own backyard.



Training is conducted in exact replicas of the unit's MH-47 Chinook, MH-60 Black Hawk and even A/MH-6 Little Bird helicopters. This includes everything from the cockpit design, door locations and the amount of head room above the seats, to the weapons systems, technology and unique external mechanical parts of the airframe, like the refueling probes, skids, pods and hoist mechanisms.

Chief Warrant Officer Brian Fuller, a Little Bird pilot and the safety officer for the 160th's training company, said the value of this training environment cannot be understated.

"For fourteen years, I've been conducting this kind of training in something that resembles a 47 or 60," he said. "This is great. You develop muscle memory so egress from your specific aircraft becomes second nature."

Regiment is currently conducting three programs of instruction for its flight crews at the facility, which includes a two-day basic dunker course, a one-day dunker refresher course and a HEEDS refresher course. Future training concepts include hoist operations, caving ladder and extended sea survival training.

The facility is overseen by a Night Stalker, and the training is conducted by a nine-person contractor team with extensive aquatics, military and special

operations experience.

"The biggest benefit of this training program is that we have the ability to coach and mentor our crews to train to standard," said Bill Feeney, Regiment's simulation training facility manager.

Eric Parnell, ATF chief instructor, agrees. "We can spend as much time as we need to with each Soldier, even breaking the training down one-on-one if we need to."

This individualized and unit-oriented training focus allows for a crawl-walk-run progression. All Soldiers first receive classroom and individual instruction in the pool before training in the simulated airframe. The first iteration of the simulator can be done in calm water, and then instructors can add simulated environmental elements like waves, wind, rain, rotor wash and combat sounds on subsequent iterations to make the situation progressively more challenging and realistic.

"We are providing our aviators and crews the most realistic training in DoD," said Feeney. "It's going to better prepare them to respond in a real-world situation."

Soldiers surface from an MH-47/60 configurable modular egress training system™ during egress training in the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment Aquatics Training Facility. Courtesy photo.





AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



Combat Controller receives Air Force Cross

Staff Sgt. Zachary Rhyner deployed to Afghanistan in 2008. Rhyner, a combat controller with the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Air Force Base, N.C., was awarded the Air Force Cross and Purple Heart for his actions in Shok Valley, Afghanistan, April 6, 2008. The Air Force Cross is second only to the Medal of Honor. U.S. Air Force photo.

*By Tech. Sgt. Amaani Lyle
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs*

Tears filled in Sue Rhyner's eyes as she talked about her son, who, in a ceremony at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., March 10 received the Air Force Cross, the highest military decoration awarded by the service, and a Purple Heart.

Staff Sgt. Zachary Rhyner, of the 21st Special Tactics Squadron from Pope Air Force Base, N.C., received the medal for uncommon valor during Operation Enduring Freedom before a crowd of hundreds

donning combat controllers' red berets.

The decoration is second only to the Medal of Honor, and is awarded by the president.

"This is overwhelming. I couldn't be prouder," Ms. Rhyner said. "Zac is part of an awesome group of individuals who personify teamwork - something he learned early on being one of five children."

Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley presented Rhyner the Air Force Cross for his actions during an intense 6½ hour battle in Shok Valley, Afghanistan, April 6, 2008. The Air



Force has not awarded the decoration in more than six years.

“Your actions are now and forever woven into the rich fabric of service, integrity and excellence that has connected generations of America’s Airmen since the very inception of airpower,” Donley said to Rhyner.

“Rarely do we present an Airman with the Air Force Cross, let alone a Purple Heart, and with good reason. The Air Force Cross is reserved for those who demonstrate unparalleled valor in the face of insurmountable odds.”

Donley added that among the millions who have served, only 192 Air Force Crosses have been awarded.

Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Norton Schwartz presented Rhyner with the Purple Heart. Schwartz said Special Forces Soldiers lived to tell the story of the Shok Valley battle thanks to the courage, tenacity, teamwork, as well as the invaluable and selfless efforts of Rhyner.

Despite injuries he sustained as the result of persistent insurgent fire, Rhyner coordinated more than 50 aerial attacks to continuously repel the enemy during the beleaguering battle that occurred during his first deployment. According to the decoration citation, Rhyner “provided suppressive fire with his M-4 rifle against enemy fire while fellow teammates were extracted from the line of fire.”

“The team survived this hellish scene ... not by chance, not by luck and not by the failings of a weak or timid foe,” Schwartz said.

The general spoke emotionally and with gratitude for the team’s devotion to duty and courage in the line of fire.

“A grateful nation could not be more proud for what you do and no doubt what you will do,” Schwartz said.

Lt. Col. Michael Martin, the 21st STS commander, echoed the efforts of Rhyner and the aviators from above.

“Zac — systematically with (F-15E) Strike Eagles, A-10 (Thunderbolt IIs) and AH-64 (Apaches) — unleashed hell on the enemy,” Martin said. “The enemy had the proverbial high ground that day on those mountain ridge lines, but it was the aviators in the sky who truly held the highest ground.”



Secretary of the Air Force Michael Donley presents Staff Sgt. Zachary Rhyner the Air Force Cross at Pope Air Force Base, N.C., Rhyner of the 21st Special Tactics Squadron, Pope Air Force Base, N.C., received the medal for uncommon valor during Operation Enduring Freedom for his actions during an intense 6.5-hour battle in Shok Valley, Afghanistan, April 6, 2008. U.S. Air Force photo.

Martin credited the 335th Fighter Squadron from Seymour Johnson Air Force Base, N.C., and the 81st Fighter Squadron from Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, for providing critical close-air support during the battle. Rhyner’s demonstration of teamwork among his colleagues and flying units was the linear theme of the ceremony.

For the same battle, an unprecedented 10 Special Forces Soldiers received Silver Stars, the Army’s third highest award for valor in combat.

“It all boils down to teamwork,” Martin said to Rhyner. “You did exactly what you get paid to do — kill the enemy -- and you did a damned good job.”

Perhaps Rhyner’s heroism is bested only by his humility.

“Any other combat controller in the same position would’ve done just what I did,” said Rhyner, who was a senior airman at the time of the battle.

Rhyner’s father, Paul Rhyner, said he now has only one expectation for his son and other Special Operations Forces in future missions. “Come home safe; all of you.”

AFSOC welcomes first female



(Inset) Lt. Col. Brenda Cartier, 4th Special Operations Squadron, addresses members of the squadron for the first time as their commander. Cartier, the first female commander of an AFSOC flying squadron, assumed command of the squadron from Lt. Col. Jim Rodriguez. AFSOC photo.

By 1st Lt. Lauren Johnson
1st Special Operations Wing Public Affairs

An Airman from the 4th Special Operations Squadron became the first female to command a flying squadron in Air Force Special Operations Command during a ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla., Feb. 20.

Lt. Col. Brenda Cartier assumed command of the 4th SOS, which employs the AC-130U “Spooky” gunship, from Lt. Col. Jim Rodriguez in a hangar packed with family, friends and colleagues.

“It’s a historic moment for us in AFSOC,” said Col. Dennis Pannell, 1st Special Operations Group commander, who officiated the ceremony.

Cartier is a fire control officer on the gunship with more than 4,000 flying hours and previously served as the squadron’s operations officer under Rodriguez.

“She’s well prepared and well trained to take on this task, and we really look forward to her ability to lead this squadron in combat,” Pannell said.

Rodriguez called the new commander his friend and confidant.

“She has tremendous patience, intellect and unending energy,” he said. “She will take this squadron on to new and greater things.”

Rodriguez served as commander for 22 months, during which time the squadron was constantly deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan, added four operational aircraft and was named best flying squadron in AFSOC for 2007.

“Your leadership is clearly evident,” Pannell said. “While there is tremendous talent in the 4th SOS, it takes steady and mature leadership to develop it. You’ve laid the foundation for many leaders of Spooky lineage.”

Rodriguez’s family members traveled from as far as

flying squadron commander



Honduras to witness the ceremony. He received the Meritorious Service Medal for his tenure as squadron commander and operations officer.

Cartier said she was “very blessed” to take command of a squadron with such a rich history and such a relevant mission.

“When I arrived twelve years ago, the gunships were the newest weapons system, unproven in combat, but ready for action,” she said. “Today we are the longest continuously deployed AFSOC weapons system and one of the most

combat-experienced squadrons in Air Commando history.”

The 4th SOS has been deployed in support of Operations Enduring and Iraqi Freedom since Sept. 11, 2001, logging more than 1,800 accident-free combat sorties.

“We will continue to be challenged and called upon to support our nation’s efforts,” Cartier said. “I assure you I will give you the full measure of my commitment to ensure the 4th SOS remains the most feared and revered weapons system platform on the battlefield.”



Lt. Col. Brenda Cartier, 4th Special Operations Squadron commander, accepts her squadron's guidon from Col. Dennis Pannell, 1st Special Operations Group commander, during a change of command ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Cartier, the first female commander of a Special Operations flying squadron, assumed command from Lt. Col. Jim Rodriguez. AFSOC photo.



AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

Wounded Special Ops Weatherman focuses on new battle

By Chief Master Sgt. Ty Foster
Air Force Special Operations Command

In an instant, Senior Airman Alex Eudy went from battling the enemies of Afghanistan to battling for his life.

It was just after 1 a.m. Jan. 24. He was only two months into his first deployment after graduating from advanced-skills training in September 2008. The Special Operations Weatherman and the Marines he served with were on patrol about 30 miles from their firebase in the western province of Farah.

Behind the wheel of the fourth of four humvees, Eudy and the five others in his vehicle kept their eyes peeled for variations in the road surface, exposed wires, freshly dug soil. “Scab left” or “scab right,” they called out. The driver adjusted his path of travel accordingly to mitigate the threat to the Special Operations patrol.

Then the roadway erupted.

Two 155mm mortars and a Soviet anti-tank mine were command-detonated under the front of the vehicle. The engine flew 30 feet away as the six-ton rig somersaulted three times. The concussion of the blast rendered Eudy unconscious.

His personal protective gear had done its job. There were no puncture wounds or lacerations from flying debris. In the violence of the explosion, however, his helmet chinstrap had sawed through the skin on his lower jaw. Everything else seemed fine, except his legs.

When he came to, he said he was lying nearby, outside the vehicle. He thought he’d been thrown out.

“My Marines told me when they pulled me out of the vehicle, they could hear the bones crunching,” the 22-



Lt. Gen. Donny Wurster, commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, pins the Air Force Combat Action Medal on Senior Airman Alex Eudy's shirt during an informal ceremony at the hospital at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla. Eudy also received the Purple Heart for injuries he received during his deployment in Afghanistan. An improvised explosive device destroyed the vehicle he and five other U.S. military members were traveling in. All six survived the attack. Eudy is a Special Operations Weatherman in the 10th Combat Weather Squadron at Hurlburt Field, Fla. Photo by Chief Master Sgt. Ty Foster.

year-old warrior said. “Of the six of us in that vehicle, I was one of two who were non-ambulatory.”

So Eudy became the casualty collection point as the Marine Special Ops team set a defensive perimeter and

requested medevac airlift. He didn't just lie there, Eudy said. He checked his buddies and put his combat lifesaver first aid training to work. He checked his weapon. The 9 mm pistol was still in its holster, but his M-4 rifle had been lost in the explosion.

In the hours and days after the explosion, Eudy's parents, Dale and Kathy Eudy of Highlands Ranch, Colo., spoke with their son and others involved in the convoy, medical evacuation, treatment and travel back to the United States.

Despite dozens of fractures from both knees down, the Special Ops Weatherman kept his mission focus, Mr. Eudy said. With a medical evacuation helicopter, Eudy's Special Operations weather team mission was paramount.

"When the medevac was inbound, Alex was telling his Marines how to use his instruments to pass critical weather data for the helicopter landing zone," Mr. Eudy said.

"That's what we do, generate high-fidelity, localized, mission-tailored forecast for ingress, employment and egress of air, land, and sea forces," Eudy said.

His training and discipline had earned him his gray beret, fulfilling a dream he'd held as a 17-year-old. Now it would bolster him for survival and recovery.

"When the medevac helicopter touched down, the flight medical technician knelt down to Alex who was strapped down on the stretcher," Mr. Eudy said. "'We're gonna take care of you,' he said. 'You're going to be ok.'"

In triage later that morning, Eudy said he heard the doctor saying, "The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." The quote by Sir Edmund Burke is tattooed on Eudy's back.

"That's why we're here," Eudy said. "That's why Special Tactics is so important. We can't sit around and let evil triumph."

Less than 10 days after the explosion, the Airman was lying in a waiting room in the hospital at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., swaddled from the knees down in bandages, bones pinned, screwed and grafted. He was surrounded by family and friends, "and everyone is Alex's friend," Mrs. Eudy said.

Lt. Gen. Donny Wurster, the commander of Air Force Special Operations Command, stopped in to present

Eudy the Purple Heart and the Air Force Combat Action Medal.

The only time Eudy's "eyes leaked," as he put it, was when he offered tribute to his fellows who were wounded with him and to the Marines who had adopted him as one of their own.

They adopted him, as they do all Special Operations battlefield Airmen, because, despite their high operations tempo, these Airmen seamlessly integrate with their sister service brothers.

"We're in the field in direct contact with enemy fighters and friendly air assets, keeping them abreast of real-time conditions on the target," said Senior Master Sgt. Scott Gilbert, 10th Combat Weather Squadron operations NCO in charge.

Despite the months of painful healing, rehabilitation and reliance on others, he is not dissuaded.

"Wallowing in sorrows doesn't do anybody any good," Eudy said. "I'm not out of the fight. This is just a different kind of fight."

He approaches his recovery just like any other mission.

"Just like we pack our gear for a mission, I know what's going on with my treatment," he said. "I'm packing my tools for a different battlefield. As a patient, I'll never be uneducated. I'll know my treatment options and medications."

He hopes his recovery will lead him to the Center for the Intrepid at Brooke Army Medical Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Eudy said there is a chance he will not return to duty as a fully functioning and deployable Special Operations weather team member. Regardless, his Special Tactics brethren offer unflagging support to Eudy and his family. That camaraderie, seemingly forged in the DNA of Special Tactics Airmen, will carry Eudy down the road to recovery, he said.

"They become your family and families intertwine," Eudy said. "In Special Tactics, you're held to a higher calling. It's something more that protects you, not only on the battlefield, but on the home front as well."

Time will tell whether Eudy wins his battle to regain his former mobility. Vast challenges are ahead, but Eudy — Airman, warrior, friend — is keeping his eyes forward to win the next battle.





AIR FORCE SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND

AFSOC Special Operators honored at Pentagon ceremony

*Story and photo by Staff Sgt. J.G. Buzanowski
Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs*

Five Special Operations Airmen were honored at a ceremony in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes.

The award winners are:

Fighter Duty Officer Award - Capt. Brett Plummer

Plummer is a fighter duty officer assigned to the 4th Air Support Operations Squadron at Sullivan Barracks in Mannheim, Germany. During his deployment to Iraq, Plummer supported more than 300 tactical air control party and combat weather specialists across the country. He streamlined the process on how close-air support is used in theater, reducing coalition aircraft's reaction time to assist troops in harm's way.

Air Liaison Officer Award - Capt. Christopher Wilson

Wilson is an air liaison officer with the 17th ASOS, Fort Lewis, Wash. He served as a fire support officer, where he planned and controlled 150 missions in which 200 high-value individuals were detained and 50 enemy combatants killed. During a high-profile mission, he was the fire support coordinator and joint terminal attack controller in charge of 15 different assets that killed four enemy combatants and captured one high-value target.

Staff Sgt. Jacob Frazier TACP JTAC Award - Tech. Sgt. John DeMaso

DeMaso is a TACP JTAC with the 2nd ASOS, Vilseck, Germany. While deployed in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom, he participated in more than 250 combat engagements. During one operation, he controlled more than 30 hours of close-air support against an al-Qaida stronghold, capturing 12 enemy combatants. He also provided first aid to 15 Iraqi citizens wounded in a suicide bombing. DeMaso was featured in Portraits of Courage, Vol. III, an annual selection highlighting the heroic efforts of Airmen.

Fighter Duty Technician Award - Staff Sgt. Justin Cremer

Sergeant Cremer is a battalion air liaison officer with the 25th ASOS, Wheeler Army Airfield, Hawaii. He's a leading authority on digitally-aided close-air-support systems and developed tactics used in combat today. During one exercise,

his efforts improved the accuracy of close-air support by 78 percent and reduced troubleshooting time by 50 percent.

Airman 1st Class Raymond Losano TACP Award - Senior Airman Alexander Royal

Royal is a TACP journeyman with the 13th ASOS, Fort Carson, Colo. While deployed to Iraq, he participated in 22 named operations and 47 raids that decreased enemy attacks 15 percent. When his unit came under attack, Royal established communications for his JTAC and provided suppressing fire during the hour-long battle. He provided 60 hours of close-air support and electronic warfare, ensuring the safety of friendly forces. His actions led to the capture of 29 insurgents, four high-value targets, 1,400 assault rifles and rocket-propelled grenades and 200 pounds of improvised explosive materials.

The Air Force director of operations, Maj. Gen. Marke Gibson, was the guest speaker for the event.

"These Airmen are our heroes," he said. "They're a hard-working community that largely goes unheralded for their efforts. As pilots, we rely on them all the time, so it's great that we can gather here at the Hall of Heroes to honor their efforts."



Maj. Gen. Marke Gibson, Air Force director of operations, applauds five Special Operations Airmen who received awards at the Hall of Heroes in the Pentagon. The honorees are (left to right): Capt. Christopher Wilson, Tech. Sgt. John DeMaso, Senior Airman Alexander Royal, Capt. Brett Plummer and Staff Sgt. Justin Cremer.

Cannon security forces Airman receives Air Force level award

*By Airman 1st Class Elliott Sprehe
27th Special Operations Wing Public Affairs*

A security forces Airman was recently recognized at the Air Force level with the Outstanding Security Forces Support Staff Airman Award.

Staff Sgt. Brett Pragle, 27th Special Operations Security Forces Squadron, won the functional career field award for various duties.

"I really didn't think I had a chance," said Pragle. "I was home on leave and got calls from a bunch of people congratulating me (for winning at the Air Force level)."

Pragle's accomplishments include duties he performed both at Cannon Air Force Base, N.M., and while assigned to the Bagram Theater Internment Facility in Afghanistan during an eight-month Joint Expeditionary Tasking deployment.

"I was proud to be doing what I was doing," said Pragle. While deployed, he provided security for a visit by the International Committee of the Red Cross, conducted 1,000 cell searches, 10,000 personnel searches and seized 1,000 dangerous weapons and contraband.

"He holds people to standards and tries to set the standards himself," said Maj. Damian Schlusel, 27th SOSFS commander. "He cares about the job and takes a lot of pride in his work."

Taking pride in one's work represents a large part of Pragle's philosophy. He was a founding member in the 755th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron's Airman's Council and a team leader for Operation Care, which helped package and deliver more than 30 relief boxes to Afghani orphanages.

"I think to win at the Air Force level — over all the other security forces Airmen — is a really big deal," said Pragle. The security forces Air Force Specialty Code has the most personnel in the U.S. Air Force, but Pragle adds he won't let this honor go to his head.

Schlusel says Pragle's award is something all who work at Cannon can be proud of.

"Sergeant Pragle's accomplishment shows that Cannon is at the tip of the spear," he said.



Staff Sgt. Brett Pragle, 27th Special Operations Security Forces Squadron, is the Air Force's 2008 Outstanding Security Forces Support Staff Airman of the Year. He is pictured here in training at Camp McGregor, Texas, before being deployed to the Bagram Theater Internment Facility in Afghanistan during an eight-month Joint Expeditionary Tasking operation. Pragle, a senior airman at the time received the recognition for his performance both at Cannon Air Force Base and while deployed. Courtesy photo.

Emerald Warrior trains more than 700 joint forces in SOF multinational exercise

By Capt. Laura Ropelis
AFSOC Public Affairs

Air Force Special Operations Command officials recently hosted Emerald Warrior'09 at Hurlburt Field, Fla.

The multinational field exercise trained more than 700 joint and interagency special operators and conventional active duty and Reserve forces from Air Force Special Operations Command, Marine Corps Forces Special Operations Command, U.S. Army Special Operations Command, Air Combat Command, Air Mobility Command and the Department of State.

Emerald Warrior simulated the "fog of war" for joint personnel during night training exercises with live, virtual and constructive scenarios with simulated aircraft and munitions.

The training focused on joint urban operations with 33 different training sites, providing core SOF and conventional readiness training including key areas of irregular warfare, i.e., counterinsurgency, direct action and others, said Ken Taylor, Emerald Warrior program manager.

While Special Operations Forces fast-rope and jumped from helicopters, loaded patients onto aircraft "saving lives," the "enemies" on the ground made their landings as realistic as possible by setting off IEDs, shooting simulated munitions and orchestrating enemy attacks.

Ground SOF teams called for medical evacuation and troop insertion by HH-60s and CV-22s with close-air support from A-10s, F-18s and AC-130s during rescue operations.

Additionally, ground teams practiced urban warfare skills by conducting building searches as they identified enemy forces.

"You can't get this type of live, Special Operations training, working side-by-side with all the other services, anywhere else," said Master Sgt. Mike

West, a combat controller with the 720th Special Tactics Group. West has been under enemy fire during multiple deployments attached to Army Special Forces teams in Afghanistan.

During the two-week exercise, joint forces flew approximately 230 live flights, and similar missions were flown via a concurrent three-day simulation exercise.

Aircraft participating in Emerald Warrior included Air Force A-10s, B-52s, HH-60s, C-17s, KC-135s, Navy F-18s and AFSOC's AC-130 H/Us, MC-130 H/P/Ws and CV-22s.

"During the first week of the exercise, A-10, B-52, AC-130 desktops, MC-130P and CV-22 simulators were used to train up personnel in realistic virtual scenarios," said Col. Ron Wiegand, exercise director.

The simulators flew approximately 20 flights the first week.

"Realistic, high-tech virtual computer simulators interact with live portions of the exercise and command and control elements to assure scenarios feel real," Wiegand said.

Throughout the exercise period, the local community heard loud noises emanating from the Eglin Range well after midnight.

"We need to train as we fight, at night," Taylor said. "This is as real as it gets."

Special Operators normally conduct wartime missions under the cloak of darkness.

"Emerald Warrior scenarios challenged joint forces mentally and physically for the extreme demands they face in irregular warfare," said West.

Wiegand said each participant, regardless of service, came to the exercise with a unique set of skills.

"Emerald Warrior scenarios force joint personnel to interact, coordinate response, pro-actively engage and produce a joint reaction that, in the end, will save lives in irregular warfare," he said.



A CV-22 Osprey takes off right after it deployed a quick reaction force in Emerald Warrior Exercise. Air Force Special Operations Command hosted Emerald Warrior to train forces in combat scenarios. Photo by Staff Sgt. Desiree Palacios.



Members of the deployed aircraft ground response element from the 1st Special Operations Security Forces Squadron infil from a CV-22 in response to a simulated IED blast. The members specialize in survival skills, edged weapons, unarmed combat, and advanced tactics. Photo by Senior Airman Sheila DeVera.

Air Commandos train in Korea

*Story and photo by Tech. Sgt. Aaron Cram
353rd Special Operations Group*

Members of the 353rd Special Operations Group recently braved Korea's cold weather to take advantage of various training opportunities on the Korean peninsula.

Sixteen members from the 17th Special Operations Squadron, the group's Forward Area Refueling Point team, 353rd Maintenance Squadron, and Detachment 3 of 25th Intelligence Squadron flew to the peninsula aboard an MC-130P Combat Shadow to conduct air and ground refueling training, flight training and aircraft maintenance to ensure their readiness as the only Air Force Special Operations unit permanently assigned in the U.S. Pacific Command theater.

During the trip, the crew flew missions over the peninsula with some subtle and major differences to those they fly at home station. These missions included low-level flying, avoiding simulated ground threats and refueling U.S. Army MH-47 helicopters in the air and on the ground utilizing a forward area refueling point.

Capt. Nathan Dillon, a 17th SOS pilot, said the difference in airspace, terrain and the opportunity to work with different units were major differences and key pieces

to the necessity of the training.

"Korea is an ideal training environment for us to operate," he said. "It combines challenging weather, daunting terrain, airspace restrictions and various units you can't get anywhere else. The training we received here helps prepare us to operate almost anywhere."

For the group's Forward Area Refueling Point team, the trip helped keep team members and loadmasters proficient in a highly limited and critical mission. FARP specialists transfer fuel from one aircraft to another in hostile and austere environments. The group's seven-member FARP team works at one of five bases with an active FARP program.

"Every FARP site we work at has a different look and obstacles to consider when conducting refueling missions," said Master Sgt. Kirk Marcum, a 353rd SOG FARP team specialist. "Training in Korea allows us to test the equipment in the cold to ensure all seals and parts on the FAM (Forward Area Manifold) cart are working properly and can handle the temperature fluctuation. We look forward to any opportunity we get to work at different locations with different aircraft that helps us maintain our readiness."



Senior Airman Meagan Freeman (left) and Airman 1st Class Jed Bilibe, both loadmasters with the 17th Special Operations Squadron, send signals from the back of an MC-130P Combat Shadow to the crew of a U.S. Army MH-47 helicopter from the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment (Airborne) during an aerial refueling mission near the Korean peninsula. Sixteen members from the 17th SOS, the 353rd Special Operations Group Forward Area Refueling Point team, 353rd Maintenance Squadron, and Detachment 3 of 25th Intelligence Squadron conducted training in the Republic of Korea to ensure their readiness as the only Air Force Special Operations unit permanently assigned in the U.S. Pacific Command theater.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND



Athletes compete with U.S. Navy SEALs during Superfrog Triathlon

*By Petty Officer 2nd Class Michelle Kapica
Naval Special Warfare Public Affairs*

Nearly 900 athletes tested their mental and physical endurance at the 31st Annual Superfrog Triathlon and the 2nd Annual Super SEAL competition at Silver Strand State Beach in Coronado, Calif., March 29.

Open to the public, the Superfrog remains the original race of Navy SEALs and Frogmen and features a 1.2-mile, open-ocean swim (two 1,000-yard legs separated by a 200-yard beach run), 56-mile bike ride over pavement and 13.1-mile run through soft sand. The Super SEAL, run concurrently, incorporates a comparatively less-demanding 1.5-kilometer bay swim, followed by a 40-kilometer bike ride and 10-kilometer run on pavement.

There was some stiff competition this year. The event was the biggest to date and attracted both amateur and professional athletes from as far as Australia.

"It went exceptionally well, with the number of races we had and as much as we've grown," said Moki Martin, race director. "We're not just a wild-eyed, traditional triathlon anymore. We had some world-class athletes."

Navy SEALs are Special Warfare Commandos whose fundamental skills include both running and swimming – making a triathlon a fitting event to honor them.

Proceeds from the event will directly benefit the Naval Special Warfare Foundation, said Martin, a retired Navy SEAL. The foundation is a nonprofit organization

whose mission is to honor all who have served in the sea commando services and to perpetuate their heritage,



An individual competitor races through the surf ahead of relay competitors during the 31st Annual Superfrog Triathlon at Silver Strand State Beach, Calif. Superfrog is a long distance, circuit-style triathlon that features a 1.2-mile open-ocean swim, 56-mile bike ride and 13.1-mile run. Superfrog is held concurrently with Super SEAL, another triathlon that consists of a 1.5-km bay swim, 40-km bike race and 10-km run. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Dominique Lasco.

values and traditions.

“I remember decades ago when it was just a handful of men and women,” said Rear Adm. Garry Bonelli, deputy commander, Naval Special Warfare Command. “Now to have nearly 900 competitors, it’s just a tremendous turn out. It’s great to have fellow Americans compete against United States Navy SEALs. It’s a spectacular event.”

The events were run in heats. Each athlete was identified by different colored swim caps, and individual times were kept via electronic ankle bracelets, provided by race organizers.

Bonelli presented trophies that were reminiscent of old detonator boxes and cash prizes to race winners in various divisions. Chris McDonald from Australia was the overall Superfrog XXXI winner with a race time of 3:55:47. Renata Bucher of San Diego took first place in the women’s division with a race time of 4:59:51. Both champions were awarded traditional SEAL wooden boat paddles for their accomplishment. Jordan Rapp won Super SEAL 2 with a race time of 1:50:22, while Angela Axman from Germany took first place in the female division with a race time of 2:07:29.

“I had a good race today,” said McDonald, who lives in Boulder, Colo., and has been racing professionally since 2004. “It was my first race of the season, so I was kind of blowing out the cobwebs.”

Bonelli also presented the Naval Special Warfare Commodore’s Trophy to Cmdr. Jeffrey Drinkard, commander, Special Boat Team 12, for the NSW team with the fastest combined time from their best four racers. This was the first time a boat team had won the award, said Drinkard, who hopes for a repeat performance next year.

The Superfrog is considered to be one of the most challenging triathlons in the country, even by professional standards. Most competitors said they found the soft-sand run to be the most grueling part of the race.

“The deep sand up there just absolutely tears your quads apart,” said McDonald.



A competitor reaches for water while during the 31st annual SUPERFROG Triathlon at Silver Strand State Beach, Calif. Superfrog is a long distance, circuit-style triathlon featuring a 1.2-mile open-ocean swim, 56-mile bike ride and 13.1-mile run and is held concurrently with Super SEAL, another triathlon consisting of a 1.5-km bay swim, 40-km bike race and 10-km run. Photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Dominique Lasco.

Despite aching muscles and sore feet, the spirit of the race kept athletes pushing to the finish line.

“It’s different from other races because you’re surrounded by guys who put their life on the line,” said Lars Finanger, who placed second in the Superfrog. “Triathlons are kind of meaningless when you think of things on that kind of scale, so you have to finish. That stuff just doesn’t seem to matter, but it’s still painful out there.”

It wasn’t just athletes who showed up to the triathlon. Hundreds of volunteers and spectators came to support the event and the foundation.

“Having the opportunity to provide money for the foundation is great,” said Eric Rehberg, assistant race director. “Over the years the foundation has helped families and individuals. It has always been a good thing but has never been as poignant as it has been over the past six years — with people coming back with combat injuries.”



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

Members of the USA Swimming national team participate in Surf Passage on the beach of the Basic Training Command at the Naval Amphibious Base Coronado. This is one of several physically demanding evolutions the team went through as they experienced a morning in the life of a Basic Underwater Demolition/ SEAL student. Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Blake Midnight.



By Lt. j.g. Fredrick Martin
Naval Special Warfare Command Public Affairs

Members of the USA Swimming national team experienced a taste of Navy SEAL training recently at the Naval Special Warfare Center at Naval Amphibious Base Coronado as part of a new outreach effort to attract high-caliber athletes to Navy Special Warfare careers.

The visiting swimmers included Olympic medalists Aaron Piersol, Peter Vanderkaay, Katie Hoff, Margaret Hoelzer and 14-time gold medal winner Michael Phelps. All spent the day working with Navy SEAL instructors in a scaled-down, yet grueling day in the life of Basic Underwater Demolition/SEAL trainees.

The swimmers were invited to the Naval Special Warfare Center as part of a growing relationship with USA Swimming and other national athletic organizations, which is helping to foster awareness of Naval Special Warfare career fields among young athletes.

Capt. Adam Curtis, director of Naval Special Warfare Recruiting said, "It is important to reach out to these role models for younger athletes. Their experience with our programs enhances awareness and visibility of our programs to young people who might consider military service."

"We felt it would be a great opportunity for our athletes to work on teamwork and self confidence. I think swimmers tend to look up to Navy SEALs and the type of work they do," said Mark Schubert, USA Swimming national team head coach.

Arriving just after dawn, the team received briefings and donned trainees' camouflage uniforms before meeting with instructors, filling their canteens and heading out to begin their day at BUD/S. They were led through a rigorous physical training session, the BUD/S obstacle course, and "surf passage," where they paddled inflatable boats back and forth through four- to five-foot surf. The rough seas tossed athletes from their boats, over and over, giving the athletes a chance to test their impressive swimming abilities in the open ocean.

Multiple world record holder Phelps said, "You saw everybody working together ... motivating each other, supporting each other, and that's what it takes. I think that is something that will help us over the next year, or however long our career is. You can apply it to anything."

The day wrapped up with MREs, or "Meals Ready-to-Eat," a discussion with Navy SEAL and Ultra Marathon runner David Goggins, and time to reflect and talk to the instructors about both the training and life as a Navy SEAL.

NAVSCIATTS and WHINSEC conduct joint field training exercises

*By Petty Officer 2nd Class R.J. Stratchko
Naval Special Warfare Group 4*

Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School and the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation recently conducted a joint field training exercise on Stennis Space Center, Miss.

The training was the first time NAVSCIATTS and WHINSEC worked together, and students represented 24 different partner nations.

“It’s a phenomenal opportunity for two organizations that have been doing security cooperation for years to come together in joint efforts, enhancing their skills and expertise by bringing a number of countries together to execute training pertinent to the challenges that we all face,” said Col. Felix Santiago, commandant, WHINSEC. “It’s truly remarkable to see that this training is able to make a difference when folks return to their countries and implement the skills in mitigating the threats.”

NAVSCIATTS and WHINSEC schoolhouses train international students in maritime and ground operations respectively. Both have particular strengths in cultural sensitivity and bilingual instructor cadre language capabilities enabling students to focus more on training and less on language barriers.

“At the beginning, training was difficult because all the countries were not used to working together, but in a couple of days our confidence has become better and at the end we work very well together,” said Lt. Estuardo Antonio Carbaoluna, Guatemalan Navy, WHINSEC student. “The experience of working with all the students from all the countries and to take procedures and security tactics and new knowledge is important.”

WHINSEC and NAVSCIATTS students will use the training they undergo to support U.N. peacekeeping operations, interdict drugs and capture drug runners, respond to disasters, provide relief to those in need and ultimately help save lives.

“The way of the future is we are moving toward combined, joint and even interagency operations so what we see is the NAVSCIATTS and WHINSEC students get to

broaden their horizons and they get to see challenges here that they will see in combat or peacekeeping,” said U.S. Army Capt. Brad Miller, chief, Special Operations Division WHINSEC.

Providing technical training to partner nation security force students improves their individual skills and enhances their units’ overall readiness and improves partner nation maritime security force interoperability with U.S. forces.

“The students get a unique opportunity to work in a multinational environment, often the first but likely not the last time for many of the students,” said Cmdr. Bill Mahoney, commanding officer, NAVSCIATTS. “The demand for maritime focused training, especially in riverine and littoral environments, is growing exponentially. Combatant commanders, embassy security assistance officers and theater special operations commands are increasingly looking for training opportunities like NAVSCIATTS to train their partner nations. NAVSCIATTS recently added an additional in-resident English semester (80 seats) to meet the growing demand from international partner countries.”

His command transitioned to fall under Naval Special Warfare Group 4 February 1 to further operationalize the school’s mission and improve the lash-up between NAVSCIATTS riverine and littoral training with State Department’s and U.S. Special Operations Command’s goal to build partner nation maritime capability.



Students from the Patrol Craft Officer Course at the Naval Small Craft Instruction and Technical Training School on Stennis Space Center, Miss., insert students from the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation during a field training exercise. This marks the first time these two training commands have worked together. Photo by Chief Petty Officer Kathryn Whittenberger.



NAVAL SPECIAL WARFARE COMMAND

SWCC participate in Basic Tactical Swimmers Course

*Story and photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Joshua Rodriguez
Naval Special Warfare Group 4 Public Affairs*

Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen participate in a Basic Tactical Swimmer Course at the Naval Special Warfare Combat Swimmer Facility at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va. The course gave the swimmers the knowledge and skills needed to improve their efficiency in the water as measured by the time, stroke count and heart rate for any given distance swum, and they learned how to create their own training regimen to reach their full potential in the water.

Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen from Naval Special Warfare Group 4 and Special Boat Team 20 recently participated in a Basic Tactical Swimmers Course at the Naval Special Warfare Combat Swimmer Facility at Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va.

The course gave the Operators the knowledge and skills needed to improve their efficiency in the water as measured by time, stroke count and heart rate for any given distance swum, and they learned how to create their own training regimen to reach their full potential in the water.

"We hosted this course because SWCCs live in and on the water," said Chief Special Warfare Boat Operator Chris Favata. "Our guys learned to be more effective swimmers, lasting longer in the water while exerting less energy and to be an overall better tactical swimmer."

Efficiency gains of more than 20 percent are not uncommon results from graduates of the course, according to Jeff Utsch of Streamed Lined Performance, the course instructor who has been working with the Naval Special Warfare community since 1994. This course involves multiple hours of classroom training on proper technique and how to avoid exhaustion. More than 10 hours are spent in the pool in a variety of drills, stroke analysis and demonstrations in an effort to build the perfect tactical swimmer.

"If you can improve the competency level of all the combat swimmers in any given maritime environment, it can only be a benefit," Utsch said. "You just have to learn to be slippery in the water."

The swimmers all start off the course knowing the basic strokes, and then Utsch breaks down their movements.

"Jeff has taught me that swimming more efficiently in the water doesn't mean moving your arms and legs faster; truly slow is smooth, and smooth is fast," said Special Warfare Boat Operator 1st Class Daniel Hathorn.

Utsch teaches three different swimmer courses for the Naval Special Warfare community including Basic Tactical Swimmer's Course, Advanced Tactical Swimmer Course and the Instructors Course. This was the basic course, where he taught two classes a day with eight to 20 students per class.

Even experienced Operators who have been combat swimming for years can use a refresher.

"In order to become a better Operator in SOF you have to revisit the basics in order to change with the times," said Hathorn. "I would take this course again because you are never done learning, you can always learn something more."

A Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen from Special Boat Team 20 participates in military free-fall training in Key West, Fla. The SWCCs spend two weeks developing pinpoint accuracy needed when jumping out of a plane after their boats, 11-meter Rigid hull Inflatable Boats, when RHIBs are dropped into the ocean from an altitude of about 3,500 feet.



NSW Sailors complete advanced parachute jump qualifications

*Story and photo by Chief Petty Officer Kathryn Whittenberger
Naval Special Warfare Group 4 Public Affairs*

Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewmen from Special Boat Team 20 out of Naval Amphibious Base Little Creek, Va., recently completed multiple free-fall parachute jumps in preparation for an upcoming deployment and to maintain their advanced free-fall jump qualifications at Key West, Fla.

The Sailors jumped from a plane at altitudes of up to 12,500 feet to maintain their free-fall qualification, which they need to be assigned to a Maritime Craft Aerial Delivery System detachment.

An MCADS evolution consists of dropping an 11-meter Rigid-hull Inflatable Boat, that weighs up to 20,600 pounds using four large cargo parachutes and deploying it from a C-130, C-5 or C-17 transport plane at a minimum of 1,500 feet or a maximum of 3,500 feet above sea level.

Since jumping out of the back of a military cargo plane isn't something these SWCC and riggers do daily, this training is essential.

"This is a dangerous evolution, which is why we train

until it doesn't matter how far from now, whether a week or six months from now, these guys will be confident of their abilities and comfortable in the air," said Chief Aircrew Survival Equipmentman Steve Perry, SBT-20 air operations department head. "Maintaining the basic free-fall and static line qualification is just a baseline. This is advanced training for the MCADS detachments to ensure they land exactly where they need to in multiple scenarios."

During an MCADS mission, the SWCC need to land as close as possible to their craft so they don't have to swim 50 yards against the current.

That swim would waste valuable time and energy, so precision is essential.

"Being a SWCC means getting the mission done, no matter what that takes," said SBT-20 Command Master Chief Eric Fuerstenberg. "As Operators we put a lot of effort into ensuring we have the best equipment available, but there is no replacement for this level of advanced training because there is no substitute for our people."



MARINE CORPS FORCES SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND



The Saga of Raja

By Sgt. Steven King
MARSOC Public Affairs

The Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans and Arabs respected its culturally rich civilization. Some of history's most prominent writers such as Pierre Loti, William S. Burroughs and Paul Bowles commented on its beauty, music and literary legacy. But U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command, has another reason to

Raja Bachra, a language instructor with U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Special Operations Command Foreign Language Office, copies the lesson of the day in Arabic for the students of her class at Camp Lejeune, N.C. MARSOC photo.

appreciate the Kingdom of Morocco. It produced for them their chief instructor of Arabic and French linguistic studies, Raja Bachra.

Bachra was born just a few miles south of Casablanca, Morocco. Her father was an engineer and her mother an educator. Bachra credits her parents for a love of learning and attention to detail embraced to this day by her and her three siblings.

"My parents had strong beliefs about education," said

Bachra. “They believed that education is the path to success. I learned from them that through diligent study, one can learn to consistently think outside of the box and to value logical decisions over blind emotional responses.”

Bachra’s love for learning led her to achieve a bachelor’s degree in bilingual teaching from the Regional Pedagogical Center of Bilingual Studies in Morocco and a dual bachelors in language and finance from Western Illinois University. She is also pursuing a master’s in business administration from Boston University.

“I would love to someday earn my Ph.D.,” said Bachra. “My pursuit of knowledge is, in some ways, a pursuit of my own personal legend.”

While her familial environment fostered a love for learning, it was her overall Moroccan environment that fostered an appreciation for diverse cultures.

“Throughout history, Morocco has hosted a wide range of people and cultures,” said Bachra. “The Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, the Sub-Saharan Africans, the Romans, the Moors and the Arab peoples have all had an impact on the social structure and culture of Morocco. Growing up in this blended atmosphere of dialects and traditions piqued my interest in travel and foreign cultures.”

Bachra’s interest in travel has taken her to many countries including France, Spain, Italy, Germany, Mexico and now the United States.

“I love traveling and experiencing various cultures,” said Bachra. “My educational background gave me knowledge about other countries, but I wanted to experience them for myself because it is my belief that knowledge alone won’t help me make a difference in the world. School provides a person with facts, which in turn gives them knowledge, but travel provides a person with experience, which in turn gives them wisdom.”

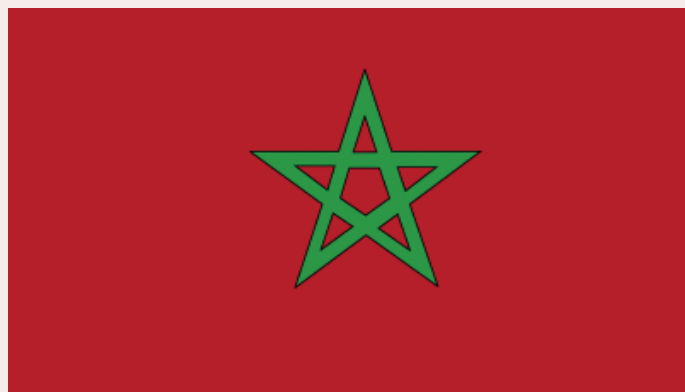
Through her experiences abroad, Bachra said she realized a certain truth: She had the heart of a teacher.

“I love to teach,” said Bachra. “One could say that teaching is the final stage in the personal development process of a human being. If schooling provides knowledge, and experience provides wisdom, then teaching leads to the mastership of a subject.”

Bachra taught French and Arabic in Morocco for six

years before she decided to move to the United States in order to seek new opportunities. Her search would eventually lead her to the MARSOC Foreign Language Office which, at the time, was looking to increase its number of qualified language instructors. Bachra’s extensive education and teaching background made her an obvious choice for MARSOC. She had the knowledge, experience and teaching passion MARSOC was looking for in a language instructor.

“I don’t believe in luck,” said Bachra. “I believe that when preparation meets opportunity it creates favorable circumstances. Through years of study and diligence I prepared myself and sharpened my language abilities. MARSOC then provided me the opportunity, and the



Moroccan Flag

result was a job that I am honored to have ... teaching U.S. Marines.”

Bachra’s commitment to training Marines and her creativity in the classroom is recognized by her co-workers.

“Raja is a great asset to this office, and we are pleased to have her,” said Vicky Sweeney, unit language coordinator. “Our instructors must bring their own teaching style and creativity to the classroom. Raja has done that and more. She is truly everything this office both wants and needs in a language instructor.”

“I’m just happy to be a part of the MARSOC team,” said Bachra. “When it’s all said and done, I want my life to have made a difference. President Ronald Reagan said that the Marines don’t have to wonder if they’ve made a difference or not, and I believe the same is true for those who assist the Marines in their mission.”



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

UDT pioneers developed their skills out of necessity during WWII

By Christian Fearer
USSOCOM History Office

The amphibious nature of many World War II operations necessitated the adoption of new tactics and the development and employment of innovative, specialized units. Wishing to defend their tightly held islands and shores, Japanese and German forces constructed formidable layered defenses of underwater mines, sunken obstructions, and beach defenses in an effort to thwart Allied invasions. To counter such challenges, military planners recognized the unique need for units specially trained to pry open the enemy's works and destroy the various obstacles designed to spoil their offensives.

Senior leaders planning an invasion of France were confronted with such defensive obstacles that, if unaddressed, would spell disaster for any amphibious landing. On May 6, 1943, the first orders for the organization of combat demolition units were issued by Admiral Ernest J. King, Commander in Chief, U.S. Fleet, and Chief of Naval Operations. His directive was in two parts: provide men for the Amphibious Forces, Atlantic Fleet; and begin training for permanent "Naval Demolition Units" for use by other amphibious forces. The seminal idea of the Naval Combat Demolition Units eventually transitioned into the Underwater Demolition Teams.

Lt. Cmdr. Draper Kauffman, founder of the Navy Bomb Disposal School and son of a vice admiral, was given the responsibility for producing the new NCDUs and established a demolition school at Fort Pierce, Fla., home to the still-forming Naval Amphibious Training Base and another amphibious group, the Scouts-and-Raiders. The new project, lacking doctrine, materials, and men to train, began entirely from scratch. The trainees, all men who volunteered for extra hazardous duty, were subjected to grueling physical and mental training, including "Indoctrination Week," since known as "Hell Week," a condensed version of the Scouts-and-Raiders eight-week physical training program. Except for physical conditioning, the school focused solely on demolition. To



Crewmembers of Underwater Demolition Team 10 on Submarine Burrfish at Pelilu. UDT 10 was the only UDT team to use a submarine in World War II. Courtesy photo.

accomplish demolition missions, the trainees were organized into six-man units and operated from inflatable rubber boats. Swimming, used only as a measure of one's fitness, was not a critical component in NCDUs, as few foresaw the teams working separate from boats or shallow water.

Although the need for amphibious demolitioners grew largely from the planning for a European invasion, the nature of the ongoing war in the Pacific drew the majority of Kauffman's graduates and subsequent volunteers. With a different enemy came new challenges. The grim complications at Tarawa, where many landing craft ground to a halt atop the surrounding reefs, revealed the need to conduct pre-landing hydrographic reconnaissance. To accomplish this, the original six-man NCDU concept was reorganized into much larger UDTs - composed of 98 officers and men formed into a headquarters and four operating platoons. With new tactics came new training. Unlike NCDUs, UDTs shed the reliance on boats and

emphasized the necessity of swimming. And unlike the NCDUs, which often operated in full combat dress and life jackets, UDT operators substituted fins for boots, swim shorts for combat uniforms, and swim masks for helmets. Members of UDTs were no longer just combat demolitioners, but combat swimmers with varied roles and abilities.

The first major test of new UDT tactics came in June 1944 with the planned Marine invasion of Saipan and the need for thorough, accurate reconnaissance of the beaches, enemy defenses, and natural obstructions. The UDTs would conduct the reconnaissance during daylight and, unlike the previous system of relying on inflatable boats, would swim, while being covered by supporting fire from Navy battleships. Despite the intense artillery, mortar, and small- arms fire of the Japanese defenders, the UDTs collected critical information that revealed the necessity to alter the original invasion plans to avoid disaster. In the months to come, UDTs actively participated in the island-hopping Pacific Campaign. As at Saipan, operators gathered key information for planners and cleared channels for conventional invasion forces in places such as Tinian, Guam, the Philippines, and Iwo Jima. Not only did UDT efforts help insure Allied victories, but they saved countless

lives as well.

The UDTs had come a long way in just over a year, literally and figuratively. By late March 1945, American forces were preparing for the largest amphibious operation of the war – the invasion of Okinawa – and the largest use of UDT swimmers. In all, approximately 1,000 members would perform reconnaissance and help clear the way by performing their veteran skills of demolition. With their natural and man-made defenses rendered ineffective by UDTs and the overwhelming force the United States brought to bear, Japanese forces fell back to the steep, rugged inland hills, putting up only a light defense at the landing sites. However, American forces had a long battle before them; Okinawa would not fall for another 81 days.

The number of UDTs and members dramatically decreased after the war. By 1948, only four UDTs remained – two assigned to the Atlantic Fleet and two to the Pacific Fleet. But even these teams were smaller; each had seven officers and only 45 men, instead of the original 98. Such a decrease in manpower, however, offered the opportunity and presented the necessity to explore new tactics and develop new abilities that would gradually stretch UDT roles in the decades to come as they prepared for new wars in new places against new enemies and new challenges.



Underwater Demolition Team members prepare for a combat swim on an APB Fantail. Courtesy photo.



U.S. SPECIAL OPERATIONS COMMAND - HEADQUARTERS

Global terrorist threat main focus of Sovereign Challenge 2009

*By Maj. Denise Boyd
USSOCOM Public Affairs*

Extremism, transnational crime, and migration and border security in relation to the global terrorist threat were the topics of discussion at U.S. Special Operations Command's 4th Annual Sovereign Challenge 2009 Conference, March 17 to 19 in Sandestin, Fla.

Co-hosted by the Joint Special Operations University, more than 130 people representing 50 countries, from military officials to foreign defense and police attaches', focused their attention on creating strategies to combat terrorism instead of focusing solely on tactics.

According to Stan Schrager, USSOCOM's public diplomacy advisor and conference coordinator, the first step to building this type of relationship between nations is to adopt open communication processes and encourage information sharing.

"SOCOM has a global responsibility to act on security issues, unlike the geographical combatant commands," said Schrager. "We are trying to create a model for increased information sharing ... breaking down barriers for open discussion and communication between sovereign nations intent on battling transnational crime. If countries are reluctant to share information, they are doomed. Nations are obliged to open up if we are going to defeat the threat."

"It's not just al-Qaida. It's not just one country impacted. This is about independent groups sharing information and dialogue on groups that attack governments and institutions," said Maj. Gen. David Scott, deputy director of USSOCOM's Center for Special Operations, during his opening remarks at the conference.

Sovereign Challenge is a strategic communication international engagement project focusing on the sovereignty of independent nations and how terrorism violates that sovereignty. It began in 2005, focusing on the relationship of sovereignty and global terrorism,

according to Schrager. Since then, the conferences have led to the development of a Web site geared toward continuing the crossflow of information, a quarterly seminar series in Washington, D.C., and the reach of the conference has extended to diplomats and law enforcement agencies.

Speakers such as Wilson Boinet, former chief of Kenyan Intelligence Service, and Maajid Nawaz, a former member of the Islamic political group Hizb-ut-Tahrir, referenced the need for a paradigm shift of sharing information while working as independent nations, and they highlighted actions they have taken to advance communication exchanges.

"Sovereignty of a nation is challenged by terrorism of all sorts, whether politically driven or monetarily driven. Persistent conflicts and ungoverned spaces due to the absence of state institutions breed terrorists and their training grounds," said Boinet. "In Kenya, we have two counterterrorism measures we have been focusing on with

great success: We created the National Counterterrorism Centre in 2004 to act as focal point for national agencies involved in the fight against terrorism, and the formation of the Regional

Fusion Centre enhances information sharing amongst member-states with whom we share borders."

Chad's Ambassador, Mahamoud Béchir has attended several of the conferences since he does not have his own defense attaché, and he finds the information sharing between the representatives extremely useful.

"The cross communication between the different cultures and different perspectives, and the contributions by the attendees and speakers, has definitely increased my knowledge. In Chad we are more focused on issues like human trafficking and drugs, so this conference allows me to better understand the position of the United States and other nations.

"This is not only a police or anti-crime issue, it requires a collective action," he said. "It is so dangerous an issue one nation can't face it alone."





Memorial Day *- C. W. Johnson*

*We walked among the crosses
Where our fallen soldiers lay.
And listened to the bugle
As TAPS began to play.
The Chaplain led a prayer
We stood with heads bowed low.
And I thought of fallen comrades
I had known so long ago.
They came from every city
Across this fertile land.
That we might live in freedom.
They lie here 'neath the sand.
I felt a little guilty
My sacrifice was small.
I only lost a little time
But these men lost their all.
Now the services are over
For this Memorial Day.
To the names upon these crosses
I just want to say,
Thanks for what you've given
No one could ask for more.
May you rest with God in heaven
From now through evermore.*

Editor's Note: As of publication date,
no SOF have died since the March
issue of Tip of the Spear.



U.S. Special Operations Command Parachute Team

known as the Para-Commandos recently performed a precision free-fall parachute demonstration at MacDill Air Force Base, Fla. *Photo by Tech. Sgt. Victoria Meyer.*